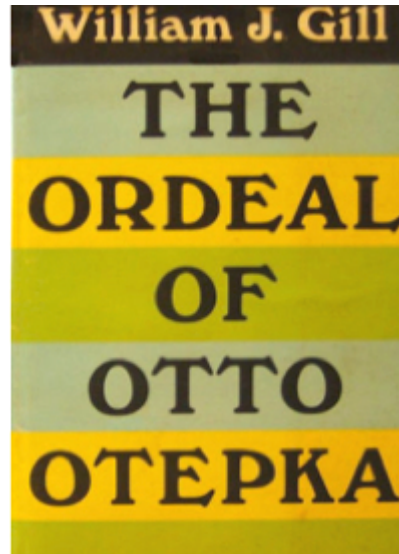




Remembering the Lonely Struggle of Otto Otepka

Otepka was the child of Czech immigrants who came to America before the First World War. He excelled at school and at hard work and, through dint of effort, rose up in American government. By the time that John F. Kennedy became President, Otepka had attained the position of Deputy Director of the Office of Security of the U.S. Department of State. This was a civil service job, not a political appointment, and was intended to provide a check on politicians who played fast and loose with our nation's security.



The Secretary of State was Dean Rusk, the man who had been Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs under Truman. It was he who urged Truman in 1950 to send American troops to South Korea, but as part of the United Nations forces, part of the "collective security" dreams of "One World" collectivists. Having urged Truman to send our boys into war, Rusk proceeded to keep Chiang Kai-shek, who had a battle-tested army on Formosa, from helping us fight the invading Communist forces. Even more disturbing, when Truman met MacArthur at Wake Island on October 15, 1950, Rusk was there listening as MacArthur advised Truman that the Chinese armies north of the Yalu River would not attack because overwhelming American air power could destroy the bridges over that river as well as attack the lines of supply north of the river. Rusk, known as "the Buddha," raised no objections. (Truman's Secretary of State, George Marshall, who like Dean Rusk was a member of the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations, once boasted that he had disarmed 39 of Chiang Kai-shek's anti-communist divisions "with a stroke of the pen.")

But when 56 Chinese divisions mustered at the Yalu River and MacArthur ordered B-29s to destroy



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those bridges (which would have made the subsequent Red Chinese invasion impossible), it was Dean Rusk who talked Truman into countermanding that order on the specious grounds that we had to ask permission of the British, who also had troops in Korea. It is surreal to imagine that the British (or our other allies) would have objected to an action that did not kill Chinese but simply eliminated the bridges that allowed their troops and tanks to roll into North Korea. Finally permission was granted to bomb the Korean side of the bridges, but the winding river made such precision impossible. Years later, MacArthur related his conversation with a dying bomber pilot, who as he spat out blood said, "General, which side are Washington and the United Nations on?" MacArthur said that question "... seared my very soul."

Rusk's protégé, Walt Rostow (whose aunts were both Communists and whose parents were socialist émigrés from Russia), was deeply mired in American involvement in Vietnam. Otepka had refused Rostow security clearance, which kept him out of the State Department; however, it did not prevent Rostow from unveiling a plan at a top-secret meeting of the Metropolitan Club in April 1954 that called for dividing Vietnam in half and creating the "neutral" nations of Laos and Cambodia out of the rest of French Indochina. This had also been announced by Radio Peking as the proposed solution of communist China the week before.

As the war continued in Vietnam, Rostow was a "hawk," who favored sending troops into Vietnam while pretending that these American troops were "agricultural technicians." He directly opposed the policy of U.S. military leaders whose attitude toward Vietnam was to either bring our full land, sea, and air power to defeat North Vietnam or to stay out of the war. Within a few years, Rostow was asking that half a million American troops be sent to slug it out in Vietnam, without giving American generals and admirals the tools to win.

Otto Otepka had also opposed the circumventing of security clearances for a number of lower level State Department officials, such as William Wieland, who had been allowed to join the State Department under the Roosevelt administration without even having a birth certificate. Wieland had close contact with Latin American communists, including Castro, and Wieland throughout the 1950s created and maintained the State Department position that Castro, whom Wieland knew well, was not a communist or even under the influence of communism. Otepka interviewed Wieland in January 1961 and confronted Wieland with his substantial ties to Castro, and Wieland, according to Otepka "... had the greatest case of amnesia I ever saw. He didn't remember anything, apparently." Despite his failure to be cleared by Otepka, Wieland was made Consul General to Bremen, West Germany.

How outrageous was the conduct of the Kennedy State Department? In July 1962, Otepka was asked by Harlan Cleveland, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, "What are the chances of getting Alger Hiss back into government?" Otepka noted that Hiss's felony conviction for perjury would prevent Hiss from receiving security clearance. Otepka kept fighting, but political bosses in the Kennedy administration, who had close ties with communists or communist-sympathizers, circumvented his refusal to grant clearances by granting special exceptions and, in some cases, even backdating those actions.

By April 1962, Otepka, who had been offered juicy and easy federal jobs outside of his position on a number of occasions and who had declined those offers, faced a crisis. He could either continue in the State Department, increasingly isolated and with his staff harassed, or he could do something else: accept one of his federal offers or work for his brother in Chicago, who had set up a very successful business and was asking Otto to help him run his company. On April 12, 1962, Otepka was ordered to



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appear before the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security. Unknown to him, his superiors had also given testimony under oath about his work. He answered truthfully, which exposed his superiors as liars. Otepka was ostracized. He was no longer invited to social gatherings involving the department. His office telephone was tapped (illegally) and the Kennedy administration brought in private safecrackers to open his safe when he was gone. Finally, Otepka was moved to Room 38-A05, where he was given nothing to do, provided no secretarial staff, and had a telephone that did not even ring to incoming calls (someone would knock on his door and tell him that he had a phone call). Otepka was threatened with criminal charges for espionage for providing information to Jay Sourwine, Chief Counsel of the Senate Subcommittee for Internal Security.

On December 11, 1967, Otepka was reprimanded, reduced in grade, and transferred to another part of the State Department. He was finally appointed, at the suggestion of conservative Senators Barry Goldwater and Strom Thurmond, to the Subversive Activities Control Board, but only after Otepka had been smeared with even more slime by Senator Edward Kennedy. The Senate confirmed the appointment, and Otepka continued to fight subversion, although by that time his new agency had little power or influence. [See “The Man Who Knew Too Much” by James Perloff, *The New American*, February 27, 1989.] Otto Otepka lived a long life and died, two years ago in March 2010 — a forgotten, persecuted, but true American.



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